

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In paragraphs 2-3 of the Office Action, objections were made to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. §1.183(a). Reconsideration of the objections is respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 5 have been amended to overcome the objections. Antecedent basis for the amendment to claim 1 to overcome the objections is found for example, on page 5, lines 4-7, of the specification, as originally filed. Antecedent basis for the amendment to claim 5 to overcome the objections is found, for example, in claim 5, as originally filed.

Claims 1, 3, and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3, and 5 have been amended to overcome the rejection.

Claims 1, 3, and 5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Knapman et al., Great Britain Application No. 1,223,846. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as obvious over Knapman et al. Reconsideration of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In support of the rejection of independent claim 1, the Examiner alleges that element 12 in Knapman et al. is equivalent to the annular groove of claim 1, that element 17 in Knapman et al. is equivalent to the at least one duct of independent claim 1, and that element 13 of Knapman et al. is equivalent to the sealing element of independent claim 1, (Office Action, page 5, lines 3-4, 6).

Independent claim 1 provides, in part, that the at least one duct leads to the annular groove and is configured to selectively provide compressed air or an underpressure to the annular groove.

In contrast, Knapman et al. only appears to provide an overpressure, but not an underpressure, to O-ring 13, received in annular groove 12, the annular groove 12 being in annular ring 1, (see page 2, lines 5-8 and 22-25). In particular, Knapman et al. teaches that, “[a] conduit 17 is provided in the flange 3. This conduit has two openings, one 18 for the injection of a fluid which may be gaseous or liquid to be forced under pressure to the opening 19,” (page 2,

lines 37-41; emphasis supplied). It can be seen, from Figs. 3 and 4 in Knapman et al., that opening 19 is opposite annular groove 4 of annular ring 1, (see page 2, lines 5-12), and that when fluid or gas under pressure is forced to the opening 19, annular ring 1 is moved forward until contact is made with the face of the flange 20, (see page 2, lines 60-63). In this position, as shown in Fig. 4, sealing O-ring 13 will contact the face of the flange 20, (see page 2, lines 57-76).

Thus, according to the analysis of the Examiner, the alleged equivalent of the duct in Knapman et al. only appears to be configured to provide compressed fluid or gas to the alleged equivalent of the annular groove, and does not appear to be configured to provide underpressure to the annular groove, as required by independent claim 1.

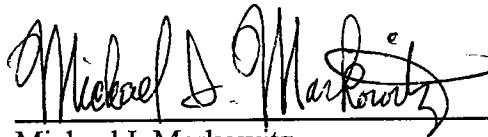
Since claims 3 and 5 are directly dependent upon independent claim 1, the arguments recited above with respect to independent claim 1 apply equally to dependent claims 3 and 5.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, allowance of claims 1, 3, and 5 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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